

The firste vertu, sone, if thou wolt leere,
Is to restreine and kepe wel thy tonge;
Thus lerne children whan that they been yonge.
My sone, of muchel spekyng yuele avysed,
Ther lasse spekyng hadde ynough suffised,
Comth muchel harm, thus was me toold and
taught.
In muchel speche synne wanteth naught.
Mostow wherof a rakel tonge serveth?
Right as a swerd forkutteth and forkerveth
An arm atwo, my deere sone, right so
A tonge kutteth freendshipe at atwo.
A jangler is to God abhominable;
Reed Salomon, so wys and honorable;
Reed David in his Psalmes, reed Senekke.
My sone, spek nat, but with thyn heed thou bekke.
Dissemble as thou were deef, if that thou heere
A jangler speke of perilous mateere.
The flemmyng seith, and lerne it if thee leste,
That Litel janglyng causeth muchel reste.
My sone, if thou no wikked word hast seyde,
Thee thar nat drede for to be biwreyd;
But he that hath mysseyde, I dar wel sayn,
He may by no wey clepe his word agayn.
Thyng that is seyde, is seyde; and forth it gooth,
Though hym repente, or be hym leef or looth.
He is his thral to whom that he hath sayd
A tale, of which he is now yuele apayd.
My sone, be war, and be noon auctour newe
Of tidynges, whether they been false or trewe.
Wherso thou come, amonges hye or lowe,
Kepe wel thy tonge, and thenk upon the crowe.

Heere is ended the Maunciples Tale of the Crowe.

Here folweth the prologe of the Persones Tale.

By that the maunciple hadde
his tale al ended,
The sonne fro the south
lyne was descended
So lowe, that he nas nat, to
my sighte
Degrees nyne and twenty
as in highte.
Foure of the klokke it was
tho, as I gesse;
for elevene foot, or litel moore or lesse,
My shadwe was at thilke tyme, as there
Of swiche feet as my lengthe parted were
In sixe feet equal of proporcioun.
Therwith the moones exaltacioun,
I meene Libra, alwey gan ascende,
As we were entryng at a thropes ende;
for which our Hoost, as he was wont to gye,
As in this caas, oure joly compaignye,
Seyde in this wise, Lordynges everichoon,
Now lakketh us no tales mo than oon.
fulfilled is my sentence and my decree;
I trowe that we han herd of ech degree.

Almoost fulfilled is al myn ordinaunce;
I pray to God so yeve hym right good chaunce
That telleth this tale to us lustily.
Sire preest, quod he, artow a vicary?
Or arte a person? sey sooth, by thy fey!
Be what thou be, ne breke thou nat oure pley;
for every man, save thou, hath toold his tale;
Unbokede, and shewe us what is in thy male;
for trewely, me thynketh, by thy cheere,
Thou sholdest knytte up wel a greet mateere.
Telle us a fable anon, for cokkes bones!

THIS persoun, him answerde al atones,
Thou getest fable noon ytoold for me,
for Paul, that writeth unto Thymothee,
Repreveth hem that weyveth soothfastnesse,
And tellen fables and swich wrecchednesse.
Why sholde I sowne draf out of my fest,
Whan I may sowne whete, if that me lest?
for which I seye, if that yow list to heere
Moralitee and vertuous mateere,
And thanne that ye wol yeve me audience,
I wol ful fayn, at Cristes reverence,
Do yow plesaunce leefful, as I kan.
But trusteth wel, I am a southren man,
I kan nat geeste rum, ram, ruf, by lettre,
Ne, God woot, rym holde I but litel better;
And therefore, if yow list, I wol nat glose.
I wol yow telle a myrie tale in prose
To knytte up at this feeste, and make an ende.
And Jhesu, for his grace, wit me sende
To shewe yow the wey, in this viage,
Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrymage
That highte Jerusalem celestial.
And, if ye vouchesauf, anon I shal
Bigynne upon my tale, for whiche I preye
Telle youre avys, I kan no better seye.
But natheles, this meditacioun
I putte it ay under correccioun
Of clerkes, for I am nat textueel;
I take but the sentence, trusteth wel.
Therefore I make protestacioun
That I wol stonde to correccioun.

UPON this word we han assented
soone,
for, as us semed, it was for to doone,
To enden in som vertuous sentence,
And for to yeve hym space and audience;
And bede oure Hoost he sholde to hym seye,
That alle we to telle his tale hym preye.
Oure Hoost hadde the wordes for us alle:
Sire preest, quod he, now faire yow bifalle!
Sey what yow list, and we wol gladly heere;
And with that word, he seyde in this manere:
Telleth, quod he, youre meditacioun.
But hasteth yow, the sonne wol adoun;
Beth fructuous, and that in litel space,
And to do wel God sende yow his grace.

Explicit prohemium.

HEERE BIGYNNETH THE PERSONS TALE

Jer. vi. State super vias et videte et interrogate de viis antiquis, que sit via bona; et ambulabunt in ea, et invenietis refrigerium animabus vestris, &c.

OARE sweete Lord
God of hevne, that
no man wole per-
isse, but wole that
we comen alle to the
knoweleche of hym,
& to the blissful lif
that is perdurable,
amongesteth us by
the prophete Jere-
mie, and seith in this wyse, Stondeth
upon the weyes, & seeth and axeth of olde
pathes, that is to seyn, of olde sentences,
which is the goode wey; & walketh in that
wey, and ye shal fynde refresshyng for
yoursoules, &c.

NANYE been the weyes espirituels
that leden folk to oure Lord Jhesu
Crist, and to the regne of glorie.
Of whiche weyes, ther is a ful noble wey
and a ful covenable, which may nat fayle to
no man ne to womman, that thurgh synne
hath mysdoon fro the righte wey of Jeru-
salem celestial; & this wey is cleped peni-
tence; of which man sholde gladly herknen
& enquire with al his herte; to wyten what
is penitence, and whennes it is cleped peni-
tence, and in how many maneres been the
acciouns or werkynge of penitence, and
how manye speces ther been of penitence,
and whiche thynges apertenen and biho-
ven to penitence, and whiche thynges des-
tourben penitence.

SAINTE Ambrose seith, that Peni-
tence is the pleyngye of man for
the gilt that he hath doon, and na-
moore to do any thyng for which hym
oghte to pleyne. And som doctour seith:
Penitence is the waymentyng of man, that
sorweth for his synne, and pyneth hym-
self for he hath mysdoon. Penitence,
with certeyne circumstances, is verray re-
pentance of a man that halt hymself in
sorwe & oother peyne for his gyltes. And
for he shal be verray penitent, he shal first
biwaylen the synnes that he hath doon,
and stidefastly purposen in his herte to
have shrift of mouthe, and to doon satis-
faccioun, and nevere to doon thyng for
which hym oghte moore to biwayle or to
compleyne, & to continue in goode werkes;
or elles his repentance may nat availle. for
as seith Seint Ysidre, He is a japer and
agabber, and no verray repentant, that eft-
soone dooth thyng for which hym oghte
repente. Wepyng, & nat for to stynt to

do synne, may nat awaylle. But natheles,
men shal hope that every tyme that man
falleth, be it never so ofte, that he may arise
thurgh penitence, if he have grace: but cer-
teynly it is greet doute, for, as seith Seint
Gregorie, Unnethe ariseth he out of
synne, that is charged with the charge of
yuel usage. And therefore repentant folk,
that stynte for to synne, and forlete synne
er that synne forlete hem, hooly chirche
holdeth hem siker of hire savacioun. And
he that synneth, & verraily repenteth hym
in his laste ende, hooly chirche yet hopeth
his savacioun, by the grete mercy of oure
Lord Jhesu Crist, for his repentance;
but taak the siker wey.

AND now, sith I have declared yow
what thyng is penitence, now shul
ye understonde that ther been three
acciouns of penitence. The firste accioun
of penitence is, that a man be baptized
after that he hath synned. Seint Augustyn
seith: But he be penitent for his olde syn-
ful lyf, he may nat bigynne the newe clene
lif. For certes, if he be baptized with-
outen penitence of his olde gilt, he recey-
veth the mark of baptesme, but nat the
grace ne the remission of his synnes, til
he have repentance verray. Another de-
faute is this, that men doon deedly synne
after that they han receyved baptesme.
The thridde defaute is, that men fallen in
venial synnes after hir baptesme, fro day
to day. Therof seith Seint Augustyn, that
Penitence of goode and humble folk is the
penitence of every day.

THE speces of penitence been thre.
That oon of hem is solempne, an-
other is commune, and the thridde
is privee. Thilke penance that is solempne,
is in two maneres; as to be put out of hooly
chirche in lente, for slaughtre of children,
& swich maner thyng. Another is, whan
a man hath synned openly, of which synne
the fame is openly spoken in the contree;
and thanne hooly chirche by juggement de-
streyneth hym for to do open penaunce.
Commune penaunce is that preestes en-
joynen men in certeyn caas; as for to goon,
peraventure, naked in pilgrymages, or bare-
foot. Pryvee penaunce is thilke that men
doon alday for privee synnes, of whiche
they shryve hem prively, and receyve privee
penaunce.

NOW shaltow understande what is
bihovely and necessarie to verray
perfit penitence. And this stant on
thre thynges: contricioun of herte, confes-
sioun of mouth, & satisfaccioun, for which
seith Seint John Crisostom, Penitence